

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 23, 2019

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

We write to you to express concern about actions taken by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to revoke guidance welcoming lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth into the 4-H organization. Previous public facing documents, entitled “4-H Guidance for Inclusion of All Gender Identities, Gender Expressions, Sexual Orientation, and Sexes,” stated that the organization was “committed to being inclusive and welcoming of all forms of diversity.” These are goals that we support and believe would benefit all 4-H participants.

Reports indicate that a former USDA senior official directed the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to rescind guidance developed by 4-H staff which outlined how the organization could best support LGBTQ youth. Disruptive actions like this send a clear and harmful message to the over six million 4-H members that LGBTQ youth are not welcome in the organization.

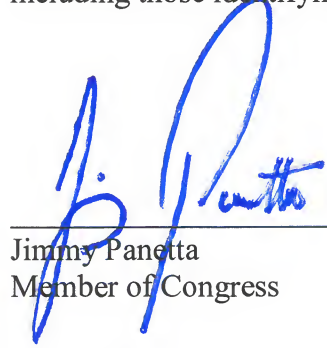
As Members of Congress who support the LGBTQ community and youth development programs like 4-H, we believe these actions represent inappropriate USDA overreach into 4-H inclusivity efforts and are detrimental to current and future LGBTQ participants. To better understand why this action was taken, we respectfully request answers to the following questions:

1. Did you, in your role as Secretary of Agriculture, direct this action? If not, who at USDA directed the rescission of this guidance?
2. When were you first made aware of this decision?
3. What was the impetus for rescinding this published guidance?
4. What internal process did USDA follow prior to asking NIFA and 4-H to rescind this pro-LGBTQ guidance?
5. What is USDA’s stance on the participation of LGBTQ youth in 4-H?
6. Would USDA be supportive of issuing nationwide LGBTQ nondiscrimination guidance that is similar to the document titled “4-H Guidance for Inclusion of All Gender Identities, Gender Expressions, Sexual Orientation, and Sexes” which was previously rescinded?

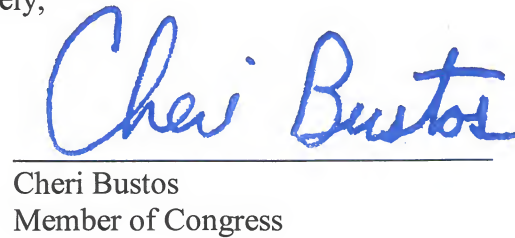
USDA has a strong history of supporting the next generation of agriculturalists and community leaders through youth programming. Your department has the opportunity to continue that work

for the LGBTQ youth currently participating in 4-H across the country. However, these actions by USDA run counter to that goal, and they must be reversed. We believe that USDA leadership should be working to support LGBTQ youth in 4-H instead of removing guidance that welcomes their involvement and ensures their protection. We look forward to receiving your responses within 90 days from the date of this letter and working together to ensure that all youth, including those identifying as LGBTQ, are accepted in 4-H.

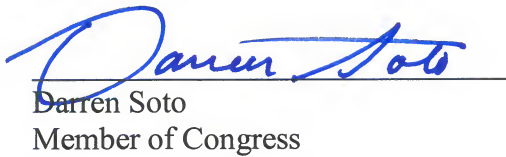
Sincerely,



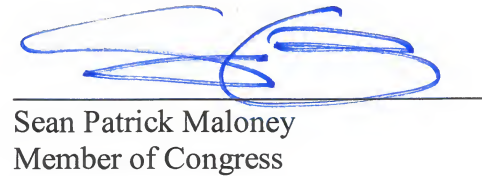
Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



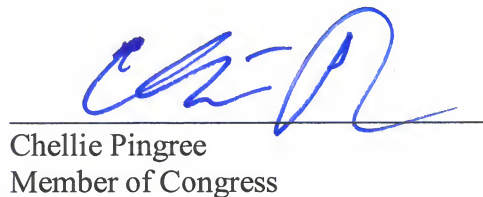
Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress



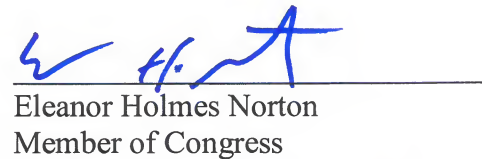
Darren Soto
Member of Congress



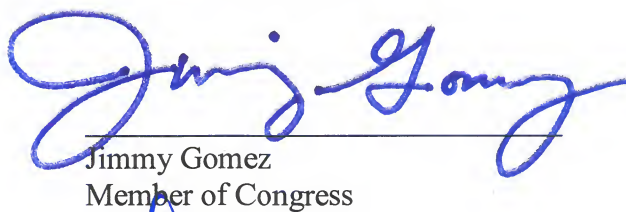
Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress




Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



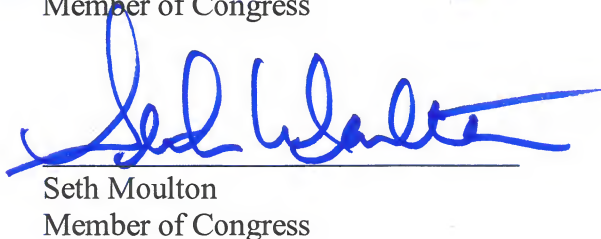
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



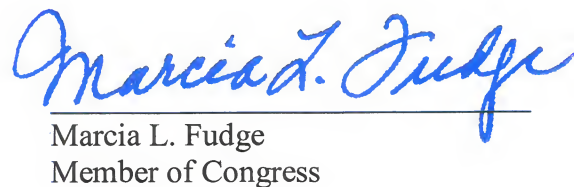
Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress



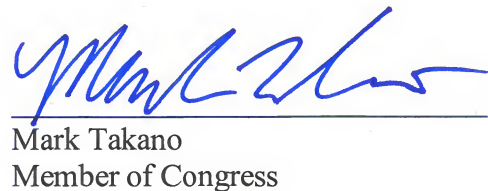
Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



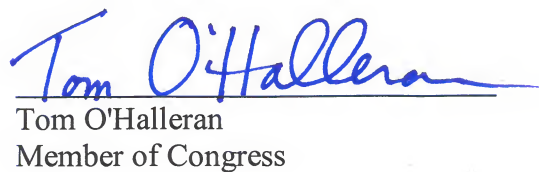
Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress



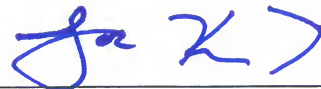
Mark Takano
Member of Congress



Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress



Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Member of Congress



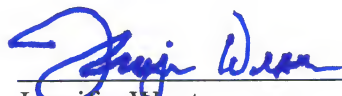
Dan Kildee
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



Peter Welch
Member of Congress



Jennifer Wexton
Member of Congress



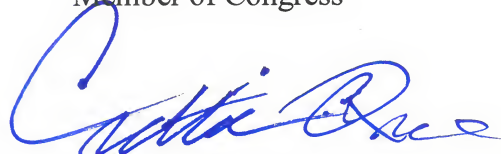
Brian Higgins
Member of Congress



Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress



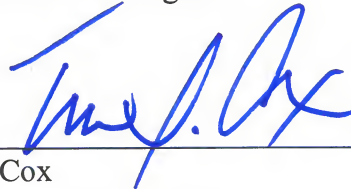
Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



Cindy Axne
Member of Congress



Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress



TJ Cox
Member of Congress



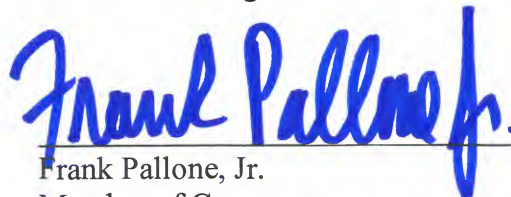
Tulsi Gabbard
Member of Congress




Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress





Ro Khanna
Member of Congress




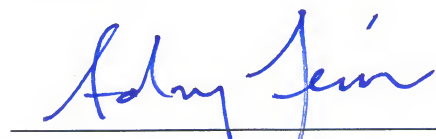
Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress

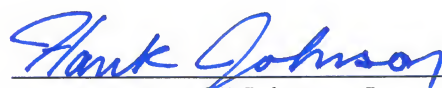

Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress


Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress



Tim Ryan
Member of Congress

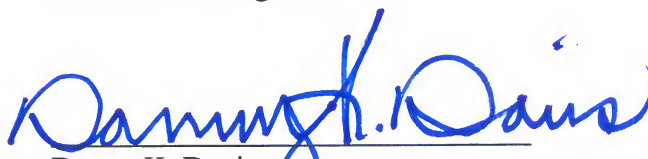

Andy Levin
Member of Congress

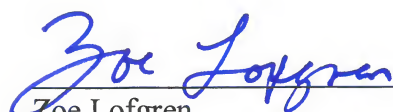

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

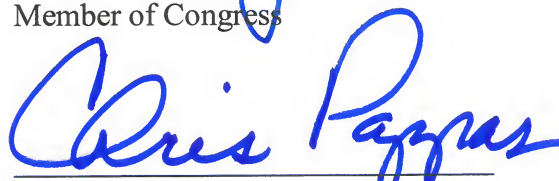

Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

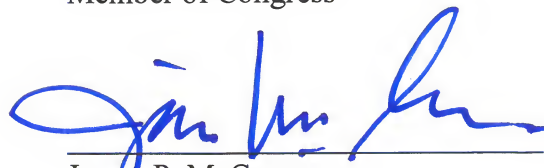

Katie Porter
Member of Congress

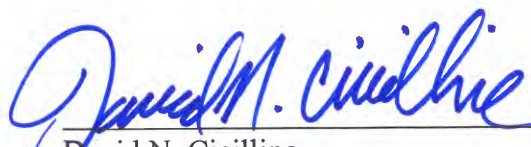

Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress


Chris Pappas
Member of Congress


James P. McGovern
Member of Congress


David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress


Abby Finkenauer
Member of Congress

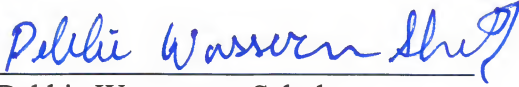

Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



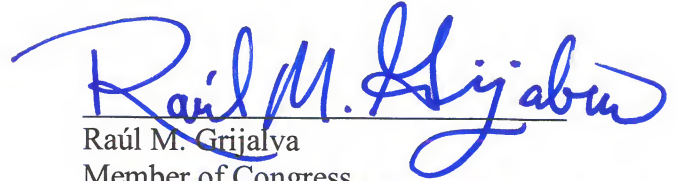
Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress



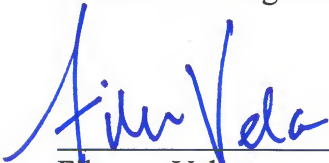
Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress



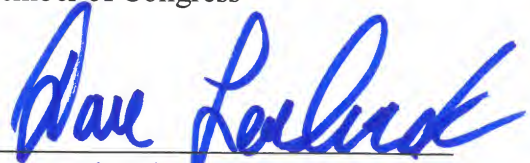
Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



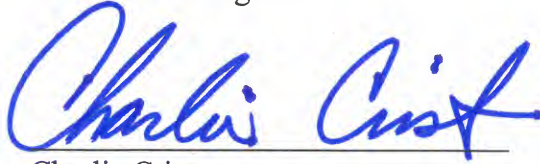
Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



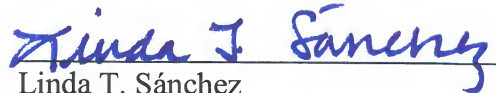
Filemon Vela
Member of Congress



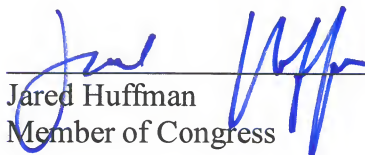
Dave Loebsack
Member of Congress



Charlie Crist
Member of Congress



Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress



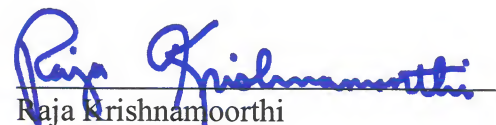
Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Jim Himes
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress




Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Angie Craig
Member of Congress



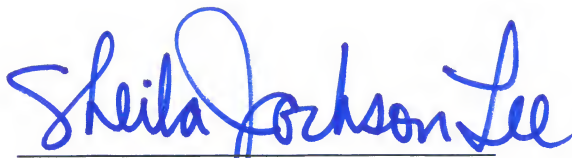
Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



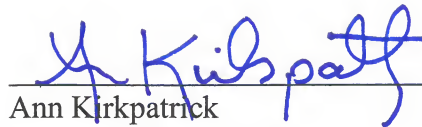
Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



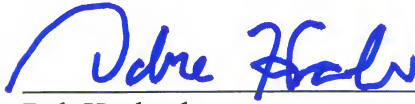
Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress



Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress



Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress



Deb Haaland
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Katie Hill
Member of Congress



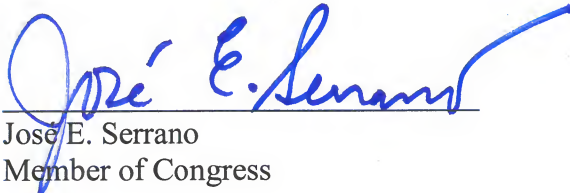
Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



Al Lawson
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



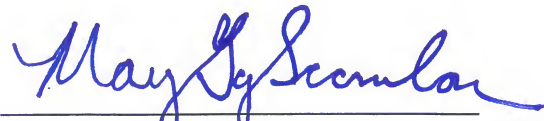
Jose E. Serrano
Member of Congress



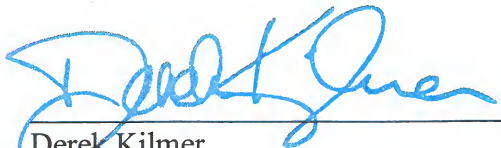
Alma Adams
Member of Congress



David Scott
Member of Congress



Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress